

Let me remind my colleagues of the long road we have been down with this bill already.

The previous Republican-controlled Congress failed to pass an intelligence authorization bill in fiscal year 2006 and fiscal year 2007—2 years in a row.

That is an unprecedented and unacceptable record for this body: prior to that, Congress had passed this bill every single year for 27 years, often with the bipartisan support of every Senator.

As my colleagues know, the Intelligence authorization bill funds the operations of the 16 agencies of the U.S. intelligence community—including the CIA, the FBI, the NSA, the Defense Department—and all the critical work they do to keep Americans safe and fight the war on terror.

It includes essential initiatives that would improve our efforts to fight terrorism and control weapons of mass destruction, enhance our intelligence collection capabilities, and strengthen intelligence oversight.

Blocking the passage of this bill, as a handful of Senators on the other side of the aisle have done over the last couple of years, has left Congress silent on these important matters and made America less secure.

Most of us in the Senate recognize how important it is to pass this bill. We know it is not a partisan issue, that there are no political points to be scored on either side. But I am increasingly disappointed at the continued obstructionism by several Republicans on a matter of national security.

Earlier this year, Chairman ROCKEFELLER and Vice Chairman BOND attempted to bring this bill up for consideration. We were told the objections of a single Senator on the other side of the aisle blocked their efforts.

I have heard that some Senators on the other side of the aisle are interested in offering amendments, yet at this time none of these amendments have surfaced or seen the light of day.

I would certainly like to be reasonable and accommodate every Senator's interest in debating amendments offered in good faith, but I am increasingly concerned that we are seeing obstructionism and delay tactics, rather than productive debate.

Some may wonder what is behind the delay. At a time of war, why would a handful of Senators be willing to hold up a bill that is crucial to our national security?

Why would a group of Senators hold up a bill that has always passed quickly, with little debate or amendment?

Why would they hold up a bill that enjoys overwhelming bipartisan support?

It appears the answer lies not in the legislation before us now but the legislation the Senate will turn to next:

A Medicare bill that will lower drug costs for seniors and people with disabilities by giving the Federal Government the power to negotiate drug prices with some of this Nation's most powerful and profitable companies.

This is not good faith debate—it is a cynical effort by the drug companies—their lobbyists in Gucci shoes and chauffeured limousines—and their supporters—to hold this national security bill hostage and delay the Senate from acting on legislation to help society's most vulnerable.

So I ask my colleagues to consider this fair notice: unless I see some signs of good faith from the other side of the aisle toward a reasonable timeframe for considering a reasonable number of amendments, I will file cloture on this bill tomorrow.

The Senate has a lot of work ahead of it and it should begin with the swift consideration and passage of this bill.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, early next week, Members of the House and Senate will meet to work on the final version of the emergency supplemental appropriations bill. The Senate's version of this legislation provides \$123 billion primarily for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, for improving the health care for returning soldiers and veterans, for continued Hurricane Katrina recovery for the gulf coast, to fill major gaps in homeland security, and to provide emergency drought relief for farmers. The President has asserted that Congress is holding funding for the troops hostage for what he calls "porkbarrel" spending. What nonsense. Facts matter. Once again, the President does not seem to know the facts. This is legislation that meets some of the most critical needs of our troops and our Nation.

In the days since the Senate approved this legislation, the White House has taken on the regular practice of demonizing the Congress and attacking the bipartisan bill. On Tuesday, for instance, President Bush repeated his hollow claims that the Army will run out of money if Congress doesn't finish this legislation by the weekend. What nonsense.

The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service has reported that the Army can use the dollars that Congress has already appropriated—some \$52 billion—to help the Pentagon reach the end of May. Fifty-two billion dollars. Unless the administration has a new military adventure up its sleeve that the country doesn't know about, that \$52 billion will easily pay for continued operations in Iraq.

The White House is spinning an imaginary tale of doom and gloom to

try to scare the Congress and the country. But the facts just don't support the administration claims.

To underscore this factfinding effort, the Army provided financial updates to the House of Representatives this week and told House officials that its current Army funding could last until the summer. Yet, to listen to the White House, one would think that our soldiers will be out of bullets by Sunday.

Another example of facts mattering. In remarks this week, before announcing that the troops would see their tours of duty extended for at least 3 months and that his escalation would take many months longer than he first planned, President Bush spoke of a reprogramming request for \$1.6 billion from personnel accounts. That is Washington-speak for shifting funds around to pay the bills. Basically, the Pentagon is considering a shift of dollars from September's payroll budget to fund the President's surge plan. Yet, to hear the dire claims coming from the White House, this shift would wreak havoc on the Pentagon. The truth is that no havoc will ensue. This shift is one that the Pentagon has adopted on many occasions in years past, during times of war and peace. This is a simply accounting move, not a major blow to the Pentagon's war machine.

It is time for the White House to drop this trumped-up crisis talk and get down to the truth.

Let's take a look at what the House and Senate have actually approved. The House and the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, have each approved nearly \$100 billion for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. The House and the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, approved funding to improve the health care of our troops and our veterans. The House and Senate, on a bipartisan basis, approved funding to speed long-delayed Hurricane Katrina reconstruction. The House and Senate, on a bipartisan basis, approved funding to close the major gaps in our homeland security that could be exploited at any moment.

These priorities, the White House claims, are extraneous and wasteful. On top of the \$38 billion already approved by Congress for the reconstruction of Iraq, now the White House has requested \$3.7 billion more to rebuild Iraq. I cannot understand how the White House can champion another \$3.7 billion to rebuild Baghdad but object to \$3.3 billion to rebuild the hurricane-ravaged gulf coast of America. I cannot understand how the White House can press Congress to build new hospitals in Iraq but object to \$1.7 billion to provide first-class health care for our veterans and another \$1.3 billion for our troops returning home from war.

When this legislation is finished, we will have a responsible plan that provides key resources for our troops, takes care of our veterans returning home from war, and rebuilds the communities laid to waste by Hurricane Katrina. And Congress will listen to the American people and craft a responsible framework for the Iraqis to